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- Today's Insider (PDF)



YOU DON'T SAY...

"Rep Deb has been hacked on Instagram! I do NOT have any grant money to distribute for a fee!!! NO NO NO!"

Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, on the hacking of her Instagram account.

TWITTER, 12/07/17

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News Summary

Student Vaccinations

The number of N.C. kindergarteners opting out of required childhood vaccinations on religious grounds more than doubled in the five school years from 2012 to 2016. And both public health officials and anti-vaccine advocates agree that the exemption is being claimed by parents whose true objection to the shots has nothing to do with faith. "I've had parents tell me they use it because there is no way for the state to decline it," said Sen. Jeff Tarte, R-Mecklenburg. In 2015, he introduced a bill that would have eliminated the religious exemption for all children except those who are homeschooled. He and his co-sponsors dropped the bill within two weeks because of opposition from those who say the government should not force anyone to be injected with anything.

Tarte has two concerns about the growing use of the religious exemption: Because North Carolina doesn't allow exemptions based on personal or philosophical beliefs, some parents who don't want their children vaccinated essentially have to lie, claiming a religious objection that doesn't exist. But the bigger issue, Tarte said, is that the exemption is allowing the number of unvaccinated children in the schools to rise each year, making outbreaks of preventable diseases more likely.

Since late November, Henderson County in Western North Carolina has seen 20 cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, and has identified another 1,000 people who had close contact with one of the patients. The outbreak of the potentially fatal respiratory illness started in the schools, the county said, and most of those who have fallen ill had been immunized, demonstrating that vaccines are not 100 percent effective. Health officials say that without the vaccine, those who get the illness might be sicker longer. Anti-vaccine activists say outbreaks may happen among unvaccinated populations, but they believe the health risks from vaccines are greater than the risks posed by the diseases the shots are designed to prevent.

If parents choose not to vaccinate, Caldwell tells them North Carolina offers two exemptions: medical and religious. A medical exemption requires a doctor's certification that a vaccine could harm the child's health, as in the case of a child with a compromised immune system. Each request for a medical exemption must be approved by the state. Of 126,000 to more than 130,000 children entering kindergarten across the state each school year from 2012 to 2016, fewer than 180 were medically exempted from getting their shots.

To claim a religious exemption, a parent needs only to write a statement "of the bona fide religious beliefs and opposition to the immunization requirements," and give it to the child's school in place of an immunization record. The statement doesn't need to be prepared by an attorney, signed by a religious leader or notarized. No form is needed. The statement doesn't go to the state for review or approval. In 2012, at least 871 children entered kindergarten in North Carolina with religious exemptions to vaccinations. The number rose each of the next four years, and in 2016, at least 2,073 kindergarteners avoided vaccinations under the religious exemption. If all those children remain in North Carolina schools and still have not been vaccinated, that means at least 6,416 students are now enrolled in kindergarten through fourth grade in the state who have not been immunized for religious reasons. Thousands more are likely still enrolled in higher grades who never got the required shots. In the event of an outbreak within a school, state law requires that unvaccinated

children stay out for 21 days to prevent the disease from spreading. (Martha Quillin, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Pipeline Lawsuits

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline has begun suing property owners in North Carolina who have not agreed to lease their land for the planned natural gas pipeline. The energy consortium, headed by Charlotte-based Duke Energy and Richmond-based Dominion Energy, says it needs to clear away legal obstacles that stand in the way of construction, which is scheduled to begin early next year. The project has fallen more than a year behind schedule and is facing an aggressive review by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

Last week, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline filed seven condemnation actions in U.S. District Court against landowners in Nash and Cumberland counties. Hundreds more could be sued in the coming months as construction deadlines approach. Through eminent domain, the consortium hopes to gain access for tree clearing, trenching, construction and, after the project is completed, upkeep and repairs.

About 20 percent of the project's affected property owners, including an estimated several hundred in North Carolina, have not agreed to compensation sums. Dominion Energy spokesman Aaron Ruby said suing residents is the last resort after negotiations have failed. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline will not completely take over the affected properties. It will allow crop farming above the buried pipeline, but the project will prohibit construction of buildings and swimming pools or the planting of trees on a 50-foot-wide strip called an easement.

The pipeline project appears to be pursuing an aggressive legal strategy to start construction before all landowners have negotiated agreements, said Chuck Lollar, a Norfolk, Va.-based property rights attorney representing several dozen landowners along the path. Such a strategy, called a "quick take," is generally reserved for governmental agencies, he said. Private companies don't automatically take possession of private land until after they have signed deals with the landowners.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline received approval in October from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It still awaits several permits in North Carolina to operate a compressor station and to cross several hundred creeks, streams and other bodies of water. This week, the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality requested computer modeling and other data from the pipeline's developers, indefinitely delaying an air-quality permit for the compressor station. But the project does not need to have all regulatory approvals to commence eminent domain lawsuits. (John Murawski, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Prison Riot

One of the three North Carolina correctional officers watching roughly 250 prisoners on the day one was killed had not undergone a four-week basic training course that includes instruction on how to subdue an attacking inmate, a newspaper reported Thursday. Sgt. Meggan Callahan, 29, was beaten to death in April with a fire extinguisher in the understaffed unit she was responsible for guarding at Bertie Correctional Institution in Windsor, about 45 miles (70 kilometers) northeast of Greenville. Just an hour before she was attacked Callahan confided to a supervisor on the floor below hers that she worried her officers were not prepared if an inmate attacked, The Charlotte Observer reported.

"She didn't know which ones would have her back because they were new and they were not properly trained," Sgt. Joe Gurganus said. Beginning in September, new correctional officers began receiving basic training right after an initial week of orientation at the prison where they work, state Department of Public Safety spokeswoman Pamela Walker said Thursday.

The accelerated training schedule for new guards is among steps state prison officials have taken during the deadliest year in state history for prison employees. In addition to Callahan, four employees of Pasquotank Correctional Institution were killed in October.

Other new measures include issuing batons in addition to pepper spray to correctional officers assigned to medium-custody units like the one where Callahan worked, the state Department of Public Safety said. The striking weapons were previously issued to guards in close-custody units. Prisons also have started planning and installing additional fencing to make it harder for someone outside to throw contraband items over the top to inmates inside. Officials also have dedicated money to install cellphone detection devices at all prisons by February, the department said.

Only four of Callahan's officers were working alongside her on April 26 when she was killed, according to a Department of Labor report. That's half the recommended number, several current and former officers told the newspaper. Two of those four officers were occupied by routine prison tasks at the time of the attack. More than a dozen current and former Bertie officers said the prison had been dangerously short-staffed for a long time. "The inmates pretty much understood that they could take over because we didn't have enough staff," said former officer Derrick Matthews, who until recently worked on Callahan's unit. "They'd say things like, 'We know we have the upper hand.' And then you think, 'They're pretty much right.'" (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 12/07/17)

Relief Grants

Robeson County has received nearly \$2 million in disaster relief funds from the Golden LEAF Foundation for projects in St. Pauls and Lumberton and for Southeastern Health. The Golden LEAF board of directors on Wednesday allocated the remaining \$14.3 million in disaster recovery funding from the \$55 million received from the North Carolina General Assembly for recovery efforts in Eastern North Carolina, which was hit by Hurricane Matthew. It was the third and final round of grants from Golden LEAF related to Matthew. In all, the foundation supported 74 projects for community needs, including the repair or replacement of public buildings, equipment and infrastructure as well as infrastructure to serve new housing developments and funding to support small business recovery.

The grants mean the City of Whiteville will be able to replace several items including three police cars that were damaged during Hurricane Matthew last October. The Golden LEAF Board of Directors voted to provide \$636,500 in disaster recovery grant funding to Whiteville. \$236,500 was approved for equipment replacement/disaster recovery, Golden LEAF grant funds were requested to replace a generator, three police cars, and two public works vehicles damaged as a result of Hurricane Matthew. \$400,000 was approved for Downtown Municipal Service District Stormwater Improvements. A recently completed stormwater study identified several chokepoints in downtown Whiteville. Golden LEAF disaster recovery grant funds will be used to improve the stormwater infrastructure in the Downtown Municipal Service District to reduce frequent flooding. The stormwater study that identified these choke points was conducted using previous Golden Leaf funds in the amount of \$150,0000.

After Hurricane Matthew, the North Carolina General Assembly responded with two pieces of legislation to support disaster recovery that included a total of \$55 million appropriated to the Golden LEAF Foundation. The Foundation was asked to process applications and distribute disaster relief funding to qualified grantees quickly and efficiently without duplicating the efforts of other funding resources. (Scott Bigelow, THE ROBESONIAN and WWAY NEWS, 12/07/17)

EPA GenX Program

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced a cross-agency program to address substances such as GenX. As part of the program, the EPA has committed to identify a set of near-term actions it will take to help support local communities, enhance coordination with states and federal partners to provide communities with critical information and tools to address substances like GenX, increase ongoing research efforts to identify new methods for measuring those substances and filling data gaps, and expand proactive communications about their health effects. "Protecting public health is EPA's highest priority and through these efforts, we are taking the lead to ensure that communities across the country have the tools they need to address these chemicals," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a statement. "The work we are doing shows our commitment to

clean air, land, and water and to working side-by-side with our state, local, and tribal partners."

The EPA does not have an enforceable drinking water standard for GenX, but the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services has set a health goal of 140 parts per trillion. Levels have largely fallen below 140 ppt since state and federal agencies started working on GenX about six months ago. Cape Fear Public Utility Authority is testing the effectiveness of filter technologies at removing GenX and other fluorochemicals from raw water. The program is intended to build on the EPA's efforts to establish non-regulatory drinking water health advisories for PFOA and PFOS substances. Implementation of the program would be overseen by the agency's water and research offices, while the EPA will also tap its regional offices to enhance cooperation with partners at the state and local levels. (Hunter Ingram, WILMINGTON STAR-NEWS, 12/07/17)

Public Notices

Guilford County commissioners pushed to January a public hearing on whether to take over publishing public notices, responding to the request of local newspaper publishers who wanted more time to discuss the issue. They were expected to vote on the issue after Thursday's public hearing, which was pushed to Jan. 4. They agreed to delay the hearing at the request of local newspaper publishers, who asked for more time to discuss the matter.

Local governments in North Carolina are required to publish certain notices in newspapers and, more recently, on their websites. But earlier this year, the General Assembly passed a law unique to Guilford County that allows municipalities to bypass newspapers. The move was led by state Sen. Trudy Wade, R-Guilford, a long-time critic of the News & Record. The move also impacts the High Point Enterprise, the Carolina Peacemaker and the Jamestown News. Publishers of those papers argue that their publications have websites where legal and other official notices are published and reach much wider audiences than government websites. (Margaret Moffett, GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD, 12/07/17)

Calabria Running

Wake County Commissioner Matt Calabria announced Thursday that he will run for a seat in the state legislature. Calabria is the second Democrat to declare candidacy for House District 36, joining Jennifer Ferrell of Apex as a challenger to seven-term Republican Nelson Dollar. Ferrell unsuccessfully ran in 2016 for the same seat, earning 46.5 percent of the vote to Dollar's 49 percent. She announced her candidacy on Monday. House District 36 comprises the suburbs of western and southern Wake County, including parts of Apex, Cary, Garner, Fuquay-Varina, Holly Springs and Raleigh. The areas have seen toss-ups between Republicans and Democrats in recent national elections. The District 36 seat is seen by some as a key opportunity for Democrats to break state Republicans' veto-proof supermajority. The Wake County Democratic Party won't endorse Calabria or Ferrell until after the 2018 primary, said chairwoman Rebecca Llewellyn. (Henry Gargan, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Coal Ash Suit

To dig or not to dig, that's the question in a federal lawsuit that several environmental and civil rights groups filed this week involving coal ash pollution from a large storage basin at the Belews Creek Steam Station in Stokes County. The lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for North Carolina's Middle District seeks an order requiring Duke Energy to remove "all coal ash from the Belews Creek basin within a reasonable amount of time and store it in an appropriately lined, industrial solid-waste landfill away from surface waters and separated from groundwater."

Plaintiffs that include the Appalachian Voices North Carolina environmental group, the North Carolina conference of the NAACP and the Stokes County branch of the civil rights group also call for cleaning up groundwater in the area and removal of various pollutants from the nearby Dan River, Belews Lake and nearby tributaries. "Duke Energy's long history of polluting the water in this community with its coal ash at Belews Creek must stop," said Myra Blake, a lawyer for the Southern Environmental Law Center that is handling the case. The civil rights groups are involved because the

Stokes "coal ash site sits in the middle of a predominantly African American community near Walnut Tree, North Carolina."

"This is a quintessential example of environmental justice," said the Rev. T. Anthony Spearman, state NAACP president. "In a county that's predominantly white, Duke Energy's polluting coal ash sits in the middle of a black community of limited means."

Duke Energy counters that that community is about 2.7 miles away from the steam plant and not adversely affected. The lawsuit actually is about a campaign by environmentalists to keep Duke Energy from closing out some of its coal ash storage basins by capping them in place under a waterproof cover that costs less than a landfill, said Erin Culbert, a spokeswoman for the utility who focuses on environmental issues. (Taft Wireback, GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD, 12/07/17)

Weekend TV

Political roundtable shows in North Carolina will take a look at allegations of bias against the court appointed special master in the redistricting case, food deserts, healthcare and sexual assault. Here's what to look for:

- **Education Matters:** WRAL, Fox50 and UNC-TV's NC Channel will be airing encore episodes this weekend. **Host:** Keith Poston **Airs:** Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. on WRAL, Sunday at 8:00 a.m. on Fox50, Sunday at 6:30 a.m. and Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. on UNC-TV's North Carolina Channel and anytime on NCForum.org.
- **Front Row:** This week's guests discuss the Republican allegations that the court-appointed special master in the redistricting case has political bias, The Washington Post's recent article about tax cuts in North Carolina, President Donald Trump endorsing Roy Moore for U.S. Senate, and ABC News suspending an anchor for an erroneous story. **Host:** Marc Rotterman **Guests:** Mitch Kokai of the John Locke Foundation; Rep. Grier Martin, D-Wake; Rep. Ed Hanes, D-Forsyth; and Donna King, managing editor of The North State Journal. **Airs:** 8:30 p.m. Friday on UNC-TV, and on the NC Channel at 9 p.m. Friday, 4 p.m. Saturday and 9:30 a.m. Sunday, or online.
- **In Focus:** This week, guests will discuss efforts to help bring fresh, healthy food to North Carolinians who otherwise wouldn't have access to it, and how 1.5 million residents are affected by food deserts. **Host:** Loretta Boniti **Guests:** Rep. Yvonne Holley, D-Wake; Rep. Amos Quick D-Guilford; Rochelle Sparko, policy director for Carolina Farm Stewardship Association; Sarah Jacobson, government relations director for the American Heart Association; Erin White, founder of the Community Food Lab; Angela Johnston, outreach coordinator for the Healthy Food Small Retailer Program, N.C. Department of Agriculture **Airs:** 11:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. Sunday on Spectrum News/News 14, and can be found online.
- **NC Spin:** Panelists this week examine how healthy North Carolina is, Medicaid reform, the state's opioid crisis and rural healthcare. The episode was recorded at the winter meeting of the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians in Asheville. **Host:** Tom Campbell **Guests:** Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services; Rep. Greg Murphy, R-Pitt; Dr. Mark Stacy, dean of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University; Dr. Mary Hall of the Carolinas Healthcare Center, Charlotte; Dr. Shannon Dowler with Family Physician and Mission Health. **Airs:** Sundays at 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. on Fox50 WRAZ. Shows can also be found online at NC Spin.
- **On the Record:** This week's show explores sexual assault and sexual harassment in America. **Host:** David Crabtree **Guests:** Monika Johnson-Hostler from the N.C. Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Stephanie Francis from Interact of Wake County; and Amanda Lamb, WRAL News reporter who has covered the issue extensively, and the mother of two teenage girls. **Airs:** Saturday, 7 p.m. on WRAL-TV, with recordings available online at wral.com.

(THE INSIDER 12/08/17)

Buncombe Fire Payments

A Buncombe County fund meant to provide incentives for job creation and business investments was used to advance nearly \$1 million to Skyland Fire and Rescue, according to records obtained by the Citizen Times. Skyland, an independent fire department that provides services to some 27,000 residents under a contract with the county, received two payments from Buncombe's economic development incentive fund: \$425,000 in August 2015 and \$500,000 in July 2016. Both times, the department reimbursed the county several months later.

The payments, disclosed through a public records request, show the county was set to give Skyland an additional \$494,675 in June, "but when it was brought to (Finance Director Tim Flora's) attention by finance staff he did not feel comfortable with the payment and the invoice was canceled," Buncombe County Controller Jennifer Durrett said this week. County commissioners never approved the payments. Flora said former county manager Wanda Greene was the economic development fund's cost center manager at the time "and therefore, she had the authority to spend from this account." Greene, who retired this summer, is the subject of a federal criminal investigation. (Jennifer Bowman, ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES, 12/07/17)

Physical Care

As North Carolina Medicaid changes from being the current fee-for-service system in the next two years to be a one run by large managed care organizations, leaders in the mental health system will have to rethink how they deliver care. That was the message at the annual meeting of the state's public mental health managed care organizations (known as LME-MCOs) in Pinehurst this week. Right now, a behavioral health patient with Medicaid in North Carolina sees a mental health provider, but care often "stops at the neck" and the patient's physical health needs can go unaddressed. Under the vision outlined by the General Assembly and by the Department of Health and Human Services, that's going to change profoundly. What they're looking for is a way to integrate behavioral and physical health care.

It's a vision that's being embraced by the North Carolina Council of Community Programs, which until now has been the umbrella organization for the LME-MCOs. The council is changing its name, its mission statement and its board of directors to position itself to represent all the new players who will be involved in mental health services once Medicaid transforms to managed care, probably in 2019. "It's a recognition that things have been changing with the LME-MCOs," said Mary Hooper, head of the council. "In fact, it's a recognition of the larger environmental changes that have been occurring now for five, six, seven years."

And even as the conference hallways were filled with gossip conversations about the DHHS takeover of Charlotte-based Cardinal Innovations, inside the meeting rooms, people were focused on the changes ahead.

Behavioral health patients are "high cost, high utilizer people who are without primary health care, who go to the emergency departments very frequently, who cost the system enormous amounts of money," said Brian Sheitman, a psychiatrist who is the medical director of WakeBrook, the Raleigh mental health treatment center managed by UNC Healthcare. "If we can proactively treat them, it's a win, win, win for everybody." (Rose Hoban, NC HEALTH NEWS, 12/07/17)

Winterville Election

The North Carolina State Board of Elections on Wednesday said the special election for an unexpired seat on the Winterville Town Council cannot be certified, and the case is heading to Wake County Superior Court. The State Elections Board attorney sent a letter to the Pitt County Board of Elections Office saying that because of voting irregularities in the form of 10 voters improperly casting ballots, the election outcome cannot be certified. The state board's attorney, Josh Lawson, wrote: "it is the intent of the State Board Office to initiate proceedings before the Superior Court of Wake County following the agency's receipt of any request for a new election that originates from a county board of elections." At Wednesday's emergency meeting, the Pitt County Board of Elections stopped short of asking for a new election. The local elections board wrote a letter acknowledging the election could

not be certified and it "sends this matter to the N.C. State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement who in turn will submit it to the Wake County Superior Court for determination if a new election or other needed action should take place."

This action means Ricky Hines, who was declared the winner of the unexpired seat after the Nov. 17 canvass, will not be sworn in when Mayor Doug Jackson and Councilmen Johnny Moye and Mark Smith take their oaths during Monday's Winterville Town Council meeting. Pitt County officials said it is their understanding that John Hill, who was appointed to the seat after the death of Ron Cooper earlier this year, will remain on council for the foreseeable future. "Hopefully we'll get a new election and a new election soon. Then the people can decide who they want to represent them," Hines said. "Hopefully will have a speedier election so the right person can be in place." (Ginger Livingston, THE (Greenville) DAILY REFLECTOR, 12/07/17)

Toyota-Mazda Plant

It could be just a matter of weeks before Toyota announces where it will build its auto plant venture with Mazda -- and North Carolina is considered still in the running. Earlier this week, the chief executive of Toyota North America told Reuters news service that a selection will be made by the first quarter of 2018. It's not clear if that means by Jan. 1 or in the coming three months. "The final decision has not been made," Jim Lentz, the executive, told Reuters in an interview in Detroit on Monday. He added that more than one state is being considered.

There has been widespread anticipation that North Carolina and Alabama are the two states still in the running to reap the huge hiring and economic infusion the project promises. That follows a Bloomberg News story last month that named those two states as finalists, attributed to unnamed sources. Most of the attention in North Carolina has focused on one of the state's four "megasites" that is in Randolph County near Greensboro. On Thursday, Kevin Franklin, vice president of the Randolph County Economic Development Corporation, said he couldn't comment on any project activity involving the megasite.

John Boyd, a site selection specialist in New Jersey who has followed the Toyota-Mazda gambit closely, said Thursday that North Carolina has advantages over Alabama. Toyota already produces more than 60 percent of its vehicles in Huntsville, Ala., he said, giving it the support of Alabama's congressional delegation. Putting a plant in North Carolina would give it two more senators and 13 more congressional representatives to press for its interests when national legislation is considered. "Picking up the clout of North Carolina's members of Congress would be an interesting site-selection driver," Boyd said. "Doing this facility in North Carolina would give it even more friends in Washington, D.C." (Craig Jarvis, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Moore Probe

Add North Carolina's junior senator to the list of politicians who think the allegations of sexual misconduct against Roy Moore should be investigated. Sen. Thom Tillis had previously called on Moore, who's running for a vacant Alabama Senate seat, to withdraw from the race. Moore is a former Alabama chief justice who's accused by several women of a range of misconduct, from inappropriate touching to sexual assault. Both Tillis and Moore are Republicans. Moore has denied the allegations and is staying in the race. So Thursday, Tillis echoed Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in saying the Senate should investigate Moore if he's elected. "I think we have to first move with an ethics investigation. We need to examine the facts and let those facts lead us where they may," he told BuzzFeed's AM to DM show. Earlier this week, former Gov. Pat McCrory said on his radio show that Republicans and Democrats are "putting aside values for the sake of a political agenda." He was referring to Moore and Sen. Al Franken, the Democrat from Minnesota who faces accusations of harassment before Franken announced Thursday he would step down. (Paul A. Specht, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Hacker Ransom

Cybercriminals took a second swing at Mecklenburg County government on Thursday after officials rejected a demand for money following a "ransomware" attack. The follow-up attempts to hold the county hostage over illegally encrypted data came just hours after County Manager Dena Diorio announced she'd decided against paying a hacker "ransom." Instead of agreeing to pay criminals, she said Wednesday, the county will rebuild its system applications and restore files and data from backups. But, by Thursday afternoon, hackers tried to strike again.

Diorio sent staff members an email saying "I have a new warning for employees." As the county's IT staff worked to recover from the first cyber attack, Diorio said, they discovered more attempts to compromise computers and data on Thursday. "To limit the possibility of a new infection, ITS is disabling employees' ability to open attachments generated by DropBox and Google Documents," she wrote in an email. "The best advice for now is to limit your use of emails containing attachments, and try to conduct as much business as possible by phone or in person." (Anna Douglas and Steve Harrison, THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Charter Revocation

The State Board of Education's three-person review panel met Tuesday to hear Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy Charter (HCLA)'s appeal to the revocation of their charter in November. Deanna Townsend-Smith, assistant director of charter schools for the state's Department of Public Instruction (DPI), addressed the issues that caused the revocation of the school's charter. "The school has a lot of excuses and no solutions. There are glaring academic, governing and finance issues," Townsend-Smith said. Representatives from DPI and Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy presented information to panel members for about an hour. The school opened in 2014 and was labeled as low performing by the state in 2015 and 2016. At the time of its opening in August 2014, the school's Ready-to-Open report revealed the school still had to address lingering issues, including board governance, funding documentation, school safety, and its policy manual.

On August 31, the school was the only charter out of 33 to miss the deadline for charter renewal. The annual immunization reporting was also not completed as of November 29, leaving the school noncompliant for the 2017-18 school year. The school is also in cautionary noncompliance for failure to submit their personnel report. The 2017 audit still has not been turned in and was due on October 31, leaving the department in the dark about the school's current financial status. After presentations, the panel convened in closed session to formulate a recommendation for State Board of Education to consider at its Dec. 7 meeting, where the board will make a final decision regarding the school's charter. (Lindsay Carbonell, EDUCATION NC, 12/06/17)

Cardinal Nomination

At Thursday's informational meeting, the Davidson County Board of Commissioners chose Commissioner Steve Shell to serve as Davidson County's representative on the nomination committee that will select the new board of directors for Cardinal Innovations. The appointment passed by a 6-1 vote. Commissioner Fred McClure, who was a part of the previous board of directors, voted against the appointment. McClure said he voted against Shell's appointment because he believed he had more experience with mental health issues. The state's Department of Health and Human Services, which temporarily took over Cardinal in late November, has said it hopes to have the new board of directors by Dec. 15. The moves come after Cardinal's former board and executive leadership were accused of misspending millions of dollars. (Ben Coley, THE LEXINGTON DISPATCH, 12/07/17)

State Christmas Tree

Roy Cooper has flipped the switch on North Carolina's official Christmas tree for the first time as governor. The Democratic governor, first lady Kristin Cooper and hundreds gathered on the south side of the old Capitol grounds for the tree-lighting ceremony Wednesday evening. Cooper followed the tradition of previous chief executives. The event featured singing by one of Cooper's daughters and other festive music. The 1840 Capitol and nearby Executive Mansion -- decked out in holiday decorations -- also were open Wednesday night for visitors. The public can tour the mansion

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, while the Capitol will feature music during those same days. (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 12/06/17)

Iredell Jobs

Iredell County commissioners this week approved tax incentives for a company planning to bring more than 300 jobs to the county and got a look at a request for incentives from another firm that would create more than 90 local jobs. Commissioners on Tuesday signed off on \$530,000 in incentives over a six-year period for an unidentified automotive parts manufacturer looking to invest \$23.6 million on a new facility. The company is considering building a 215,000 square-foot facility on 19 to 25 acres in Mooresville Business Park East. The company plans to create 302 jobs and be operating in the new location by the end of 2018.

Board Chairman James Mallory said commissioners were briefed behind closed doors on a request from a second unidentified company seeking \$310,000 in tax incentives over a five-year period for a \$16 million investment in the Statesville area. The firm plans to create 91 jobs with an average salary of \$48,000, said Russ Rogerson, executive director of the Iredell County Economic Development Corp. Both companies have 180 days from the time incentives are approved by the county to decide if they are going to accept them and follow through on the investments. (Jessica Osborne, STATESVILLE RECORD & LANDMARK, 12/07/17)

Hurricanes Purchase

The Carolina Hurricanes will soon have a new majority owner. Tom Dundon, a Dallas businessman, has signed a purchase agreement to buy a controlling interest in the team from Peter Karmanos Jr., NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said Thursday. Bettman said the agreement was signed Wednesday night. Bettman said the transaction was not completed but could be in the next few weeks. Bettman also said the team would remain in Raleigh. Dundon, 45, and Karmanos appeared Thursday before the NHL board of governors executive committee at Manalapan, Fla., to discuss the pending sale. A vote of the board is required for any change in ownership. In an interview with TSN, Karmanos stressed that the team would remain in Raleigh and that it had been a condition of a sale. Karmanos said he will remain a part-owner in a team he brought to North Carolina in 1997. (Chip Alexander, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Stolen Marker

A state historical marker that has stood near Camp Lejeune since 1993 has gone missing, and state officials are asking people to let them know if they've seen it. The marker, noting the establishment of Camp Lejeune in 1941, was just outside the base on Lejeune Boulevard in Jacksonville. The 60-pound marker and the pole it was perched on were reported missing by a state Department of Transportation worker, but it's not clear how long they've been gone, said Ansley Wegner, administrator of the state Highway Historical Marker Program.

There are nearly 1,600 historical markers in the program, and every few weeks Wegner learns that one is missing. Her search begins with calls to the local highway or public works department, and then the police or sheriff or state Highway Patrol. If she can determine that a marker was destroyed in a recent auto accident, she'll put in an insurance claim. Wegner only recently began enlisting the public's help after a history buff noticed a sign missing in Forsyth County and asked if he could submit an article about it to the local papers. Last month, the Yadkin Ripple published an item about the missing marker, which commemorated a shallow ford used to get across the Yadkin River from Colonial times through 1927, and an antique dealer called Wegner the next day to say he had bought it at an auction last summer.

The silver markers with raised black letters are made by Sewah Studios in Marietta, Ohio, of cast aluminum and cost \$1,700 to replace. Sometimes they're stolen and sold for scrap, but they can end up all over the place, Wegner said. She said she once got a call from Danville, Va., where a guy had put a North Carolina historical marker about the birthplace of a Methodist bishop and author on a post in his yard. He said he had bought it at a scrap yard in North Carolina. "It's frustrating to me

that a scrap yard or auction house would take something that is so clearly state property," Wegner said. (Richard Stradling, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Package Deliveries

Local UPS drivers are unhappy about being asked to work up to 70 hours a week during the Christmas season. UPS recently increased the number of hours a driver can work in a week from 60 to 70. Teamsters Local 391, which represents UPS drivers in Raleigh, has filed a grievance against the company and says the change could put drivers' safety at risk.

"When a driver is behind the wheel for 70 hours, that certainly puts them at risk," said Rick Armstrong, vice president of the union. "They're exhausted, they're tired. It's a hazard to their driving."

UPS, headquartered in Atlanta, issued a statement Monday saying the company appreciates the effort of employees during the holiday season when delivery volumes are double the normal level. The company said in October that it expected to deliver more than 750 million packages around the world during the 25 days between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve -- a 5 percent increase from 2016. "Our employees' scheduled work week is in compliance with Department of Transportation requirements," the company said. "Union-represented employees are paid time and one-half for work above 40 hours per week, and they receive the industry's most attractive compensation and benefits program." During the peak holiday season, UPS plans to employ 95,000 temporary workers, including drivers, delivery helpers who ride with drivers, package sorters and loaders. (Claire Ballentine, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Krispy Kreme Layoffs

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Inc. is eliminating at least 90 local jobs as part of its plan to move some operational functions from Winston-Salem to Charlotte and London. The company filed Wednesday a WARN Act notice with the Winston-Salem mayor's office and the N.C. Commerce Department. The company said it will take until July to complete the elimination of what it called administrative support jobs, a term it did not further define. Krispy Kreme said in the WARN notice that all affected employees have been notified, and they will remain on the payroll with benefits for at least 60 days. They also will receive their share of the company's 2017 bonus payments. In both the notice and a statement to the media, Krispy Kreme said it will keep its global headquarters in Winston-Salem. (Richard Craver, WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL, 12/07/17)

Fire Takeover

Currituck County has taken charge of fire service in the isolated community of Knotts Island following a dispute that could dissolve the 57-year-old volunteer department. Four paid staff members trained in both firefighting and emergency medical services now work at the Knotts Island station. "Taking over the Knotts Island Fire Station was not the county's intent," Bobby Hanig, chairman of the Currituck County Board of Commissioners, said at a meeting Monday. But, he said, "We will not allow Knotts Island to get less fire protection." The volunteer fire department declined to sign its annual contract and told county officials on Nov. 8 they would no longer respond to fires. The department named 17 points of contention with the contract including not wanting county Fire Chief Ralph "Chip" Melton or other county officials to have authority over their operations and training. Volunteer officials wanted a third party to have oversight instead. The county refused to make the changes. The county will likely keep paid staff there long term without signing a contract with the volunteer fire department, Melton said. Commissioners plan to meet with Knotts Island residents Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the local elementary school to discuss fire protection. (Jeff Hampton, THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT, 12/07/17)

Wildlife Commission Comments

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has opened the public comment period for proposed changes to agency regulations related to wildlife management, inland fisheries and game lands for

the 2018-19 seasons. For deer hunting, the state wildlife commission is looking at establishing a statewide antlered deer bag limit of two and a statewide antlerless deer bag limit of four. Under the proposals, archery season for deer in the Northwest region, which includes Watauga, would be from Sept. 8 to Nov. 9, 2018; black powder season would be Nov 10-16, 2018 and gun season would be Nov. 17, 2018 to Jan. 6, 2019. The comment period will be open from Dec. 1 until Feb. 1, 2018. (WATAUGA DEMOCRAT, 12/07/17)

Talent Broker

The prospective buyers of The Roanoke Rapids Theatre have retained the services of the largest entertainment agency in the United States. Charles Upchurch, with the public relations firm French West Vaughan, based in Raleigh, said Thomas and Evon McLean, who have entered into a sales contract for the facility, have secured the services of East Coast Entertainment for talent booking at the venue. "ECE is the largest full-service entertainment agency in the U.S. with 15 offices around the country," Upchurch said. "The Roanoke Rapids Theatre will be working with ECE Managing Partner Barry Herndon in the company's Raleigh office." Roanoke Rapids City Manager Joseph Scherer announced the parties interested in buying the theater had secured French West Vaughan for public relations. French West Vaughan announced Thomas and Evon McLean have initiated the due diligence process and the complex will be moving "forward with a new vision in 2018." A revamped event and show calendar will be released in January. An announcement concerning a job fair at the facility to fill vacancies is forthcoming as well. (Roger Bell, ROANOKE RAPIDS DAILY HERALD, 12/07/17)

Greensboro Urban Loop

The Greensboro Urban Loop's Eastern section opened to traffic Thursday night, DOT officials said. Originally slated to open next December, the Eastern section of the Greensboro Urban Loop opened at 8 p.m. Wednesday, the N.C. Department of Transportation said in a news release. The contractor hired extra crews, brought in subcontractors and worked overtime to finish that leg of the loop, said Mike Mills, engineer for Division 7, which includes Guilford County. Contractors built the four-lane freeway between the U.S. 70 relocation and U.S. 29, completed the U.S. 70 interchange and built two new interchanges connecting the Greensboro Urban Loop to Huffine Mill Road and U.S. 29, DOT said. By 2040, this section of the road is expected to serve about 58,000 vehicles per day, DOT said. (GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD, 12/07/17)

Bridge Closure

Anyone headed to the northern Outer Banks will face a lengthy detour for two weeks this winter and spring when the state Department of Transportation closes the U.S. 64 bridge over the Alligator River for repairs. The first closure is scheduled for Jan. 10 through Jan. 16, and the second will follow for a week to be determined in March. The Lindsay C. Warren Bridge stretches nearly 3 miles across the Alligator River between Tyrrell and Dare counties. The two-lane bridge, with a swing-span near the middle to allow boats to pass through, was completed in 1962 and is considered out of date. The \$16.7 million repair project includes a new epoxy surface on the deck, joint replacements and repairs to the concrete structure. The bridge is closing this winter so contractors can work on the mechanical and electrical systems on the swing-span. The detour will take beach-bound traffic from the Triangle onto U.S. 17 at Williamston north to Elizabeth City, then on to U.S. 158 and across the Wright Memorial Bridge to Kitty Hawk. The detour adds about 34 miles to a trip to the entrance to Cape Hatteras National Seashore. (Richard Stradling, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Deaths

News & Observer photographer Corey Lowenstein, died Thursday after a two-year fight with cancer. She was 49, and she died with a pair of her twin boys' stuffed animals in her bed at Duke University Hospital in Durham. "She had a warm, generous personality, a great sense of humor and connected easily with all kinds of people," said N&O Executive Editor John Drescher. "She left her mark on our journalism and on all of us. We mourn for our loss and especially are sad for (husband) Michael (and sons) Brady and Cooper." When she joined the N&O in 1996, she infiltrated a male-dominated photo

staff and immediately showed toughness that could withstand any smack talk. She earned a reputation both for grittiness and for immersion into her subject matter that the veterans rarely practiced. "She was definitely a breath of fresh air -- more like a tornado of fresh air," said Scott Sharpe, the N&O's visuals editor and her longtime colleague. "Here comes this whirling dervish of energy and ideas. She was far more able to make a connection with people. We were just run-and-gun news and sports guys. Not only did she do that, she helped us learn to do that." (Josh Shaffer, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 12/07/17)

Legislative Studies and Meetings

Items in **RED** are new listings.

LB: Legislative Building

LOB: Legislative Office Building.

More Information: <http://ncleg.net/LegislativeCalendar/>

Tuesday, Dec. 12

- 8:30 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, 643 LOB.
- 1 p.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, 544 LOB.

Wednesday, Dec. 13

- 9 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, Subcommittee on Aging, 643 LOB.
- 10 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Finance Reform (2017), 544 LOB.
- 1 p.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Capital Improvements, 544 LOB.
- 1 p.m. | The Environmental Review Commission, 643 LOB.
- 2 p.m. | House Select Committee on Implementation of Building Code Regulatory Reform, 1425 LB.

Thursday, Dec. 14

- 9 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology, 423 LOB.
- 9 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Emergency Management Oversight Committee, 643 LOB.
- 10:30 a.m. | The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, Subcommittee on ABC Permitting & Enforcement, 414 LOB.

Friday, Dec. 15

- 10 a.m. | Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee Meeting, 643 LOB.

Tuesday, Jan. 9

- 1 p.m. | NOTE: DATE CHANGE - The Joint Legislative Commission on Energy Policy, 544 LOB.

Wednesday, Jan. 10

- 12 p.m. | House Session, House Chamber.
- 12 p.m. | Senate Session, Senate Chamber.

Wednesday, Jan. 17

- 10 a.m. | Child Fatality Task Force Meeting, 1027/1128 LB.

Wednesday, Jan. 24

- 10 a.m. | Child Fatality Task Force Meeting, 1027/1128 LB.

Tuesday, Feb. 6

- 10 a.m. | Child Fatality Task Force Meeting, 1027/1128 LB.

Tuesday, Feb. 13

- 10 a.m. | Child Fatality Task Force Meeting, 1027/1128 LB.

N.C. Government Meetings and Hearings

Items in **RED** are new listings.

Monday, Dec. 11

- **10:30 a.m. | The Awards Committee of the State Board of Community Colleges meets, NC Community College System Office, 200 W. Jones St., Raleigh.**

Tuesday, Dec. 12

- 8:30 a.m. | The Fund Development and Communications Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children meets via conference call. Contact: Yvonne H. Huntley, 919-821-9573.
- 9 a.m. | The NC Building Code Council holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Albemarle Building, 325 North Salisbury St., Raleigh.
- 2:30 p.m. | The Finance and Audit Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children meets, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh. Contact: Yvonne Huntley, 919-821-9573.

Wednesday, Dec. 13

- 9 a.m. | The State Licensing Board for General Contractors hold public hearing on proposed rule changes, 5400 Creedmoor Rd, Raleigh.
- 10 a.m. | The NC Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission meets, 400 East Tryon Road, Raleigh.

Thursday, Dec. 14

- 9 a.m. | The Board of Directors of the North Carolina State Ports Authority meets, Board Room of the North Carolina Maritime Building, 2202 Burnett Blvd., Wilmington.
- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Wednesday, Dec. 20

- 6 p.m. | The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries hold public hearing on proposed shellfish leases in Carteret County, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries' Central District Office, 5285 Highway 70 West, Morehead City.

Thursday, Dec. 21

- 10 a.m. | The state Industrial Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Room 240, 2nd Floor, Department of Insurance's Albemarle Building, 325 North Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Tuesday, Jan. 9

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Bladen Community College Auditorium, 7418 NC HWY 41W, Dublin.

Wednesday, Jan. 10

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.
- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Old Alamance County Courthouse, 1 SE Court Square, Graham.

Thursday, Jan. 11

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.
- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Stanly County Agri-Civic Center, 26032 Newt Road, Albemarle.

Tuesday, Jan. 16

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Haywood Community College , 185 Freeland Drive, Clyde.

Wednesday, Jan. 17

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Western Piedmont Community College, Moore Hall Leviton Auditorium, 1001 Burkemont Ave., Morganton.

Thursday, Jan. 18

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Elkin High School, 334 Elk Spur Street, Elkin.

Tuesday, Jan. 23

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, John A. Holmes High School Auditorium, 600 Woodard St., Edenton.

Wednesday, Jan. 24

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Craven Community College, 800 College Court, New Bern.

Thursday, Jan. 25

- 7 p.m. | The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Nash Community College, 522 N Old Carriage Road, Rocky Mount.

UNC Board of Governors

Board Room of the UNC Center for School Leadership Development
140 Friday Center Drive, Chapel Hill (**remote meeting locations in RED**)
More Information: <https://www.northcarolina.edu/bog/schedule.php>

Friday, Dec. 15

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, March 23, 2018

- TBA | UNC Wilmington, Wilmington.

Friday, May 25, 2018

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

N.C. Utilities Commission Hearing Schedule

Dobbs Building
430 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, North Carolina
More Information: <http://www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us/activities/activit.htm>

Monday, Dec. 11

- Staff Conference

Monday, Dec. 18

- Staff Conference

Tuesday, Jan. 2

- Staff Conference

N.C. Dept. of Environmental Quality

The N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources has a new name - the N.C. Dept. of Environmental Quality. More Information: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/guest/home>

Wednesday, Dec. 13

- 9 a.m. | The State Consumer and Family Advisory Committee (SCFAC) meets, Dix Grill, 1101 Cafeteria Dr., Raleigh.

Other Meetings and Events of Interest

Items in **RED** are new listings.

Friday, Dec. 8

- **1 p.m. | Gov. Roy Cooper to visit Haywood Pathways Center, 179 Hemlock St., Waynesville.**
- **1:30 p.m. | Gov. Roy Cooper to hold a roundtable on tackling the opioid crisis, 1620 Brown Ave., Waynesville.**
- **2 p.m. | N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program and state and local law enforcement kick off their annual Holiday Booze It & Lose It enforcement campaign, Cross Creek Mall, 419 Cross Creek Mall (Food Court Entrance), Fayetteville.**

Wednesday, Jan. 3

- 10 a.m. | The 16th Annual Economic Forecast Forum, Sheraton Imperial Hotel & Convention Center, 4700 Emperor Blvd, Durham.

Monday, March 19

- TBD | The N.C. Chamber hold annual meeting, Raleigh Marriott Crabtree Valley, 4500 Marriott Dr, Raleigh.

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